MOTORCYCLE STUNTMAN JOHNNY BLAZE HAS ALWAYS HAD HIS HEART IN THE RIGHT PLACE... AND MADE ALL THE WRONG DECISIONS. WHEN HIS FOSTER FATHER WAS DYING OF CANCER, JOHNNY SOLD HIS SOUL TO THE DEVIL FOR A CURE. THOUGH THE CANCER WENT INTO REMISSION, A DANGEROUS STUNT CLAIMED THE MAN'S LIFE ANYWAY... AND THE DEVIL RETURNED FOR BLAZE'S SOUL.

JOHNNY WAS CURSED TO SERVE AS THE GHOST RIDER, SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE. A HORRIFYING LEATHER-CLAD BIKER WHOSE SKULL FACE WAS LIT BY A FLAME THAT COULD NOT BE SNUFFED OUT. WHENEVER HE WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF EVIL, HE WOULD TRANSFORM INTO THIS SPIRIT WARRIOR AND DISPENSE BLOODY RETRIBUTION UPON EARTH'S SINNERS.

THAT IS, UNTIL JOHNNY BLAZE WAS CAST INTO HELL.

EVER SINCE, HE HAS SPENT HIS DAYS RACING A DEMONIC HORDE TO HELL'S GATES, REACHING TOWARDS IMPOSSIBLE FREEDOM, ONLY TO BE DEVOURED AND DEFEATED MERE INCHES AWAY FROM HIS LIBERATION. AND EVEN WHEN HE FINALLY BREACHED THESE GATES, THERE WAS ONLY MORE FIRE AND BRIMSTONE TO GREET HIM ON THE OTHER SIDE. LUCIFER HAD FOOLED HIM ONCE AGAIN.

NOT WILLING TO REMAIN IMPRISONED, GHOST RIDER ENLISTED A DEMON NAMED GREEXIX TO HELP HIM BURROW OUT OF HELL. THE DEMON LED HIM TO A CAVE WHERE CLEAR BLUE WATER RUSHED IN THROUGH THE CRACKS BETWEEN HELL AND EARTH AND, HAVING COMPLETED HIS END OF THE BARGAIN, ASKED FOR GHOST RIDER'S HELP IN NAVIGATING THE DIMENSIONAL RIFT. THOUGH HE SECRETLY HAD NO INTENTION OF LOOSING THE DEMON UPON EARTH, GHOST RIDER SHOOK HANDS WITH GREEXIX. AT THAT MOMENT, THE DEMON CHANGED HIS FORM AND REVEALED HIS TRUE SELF: LUCIFER.

NOW JOHNNY BLAZE IS BACK ON EARTH, BUT HE HAS INADVERTENTLY BROUGHT THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS ALONG WITH HIM.

THERE'S GONNA BE HELL TO PAY...

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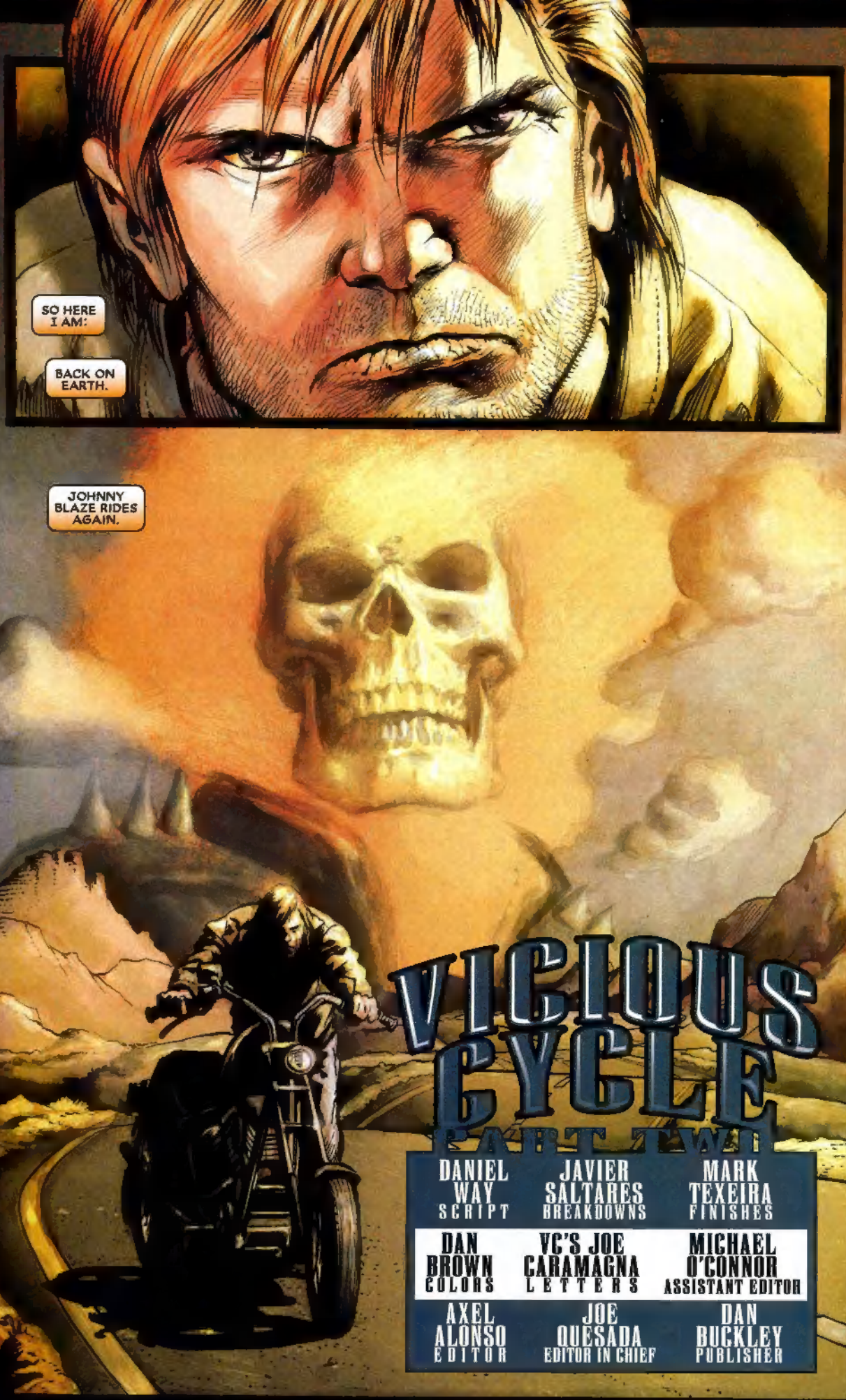
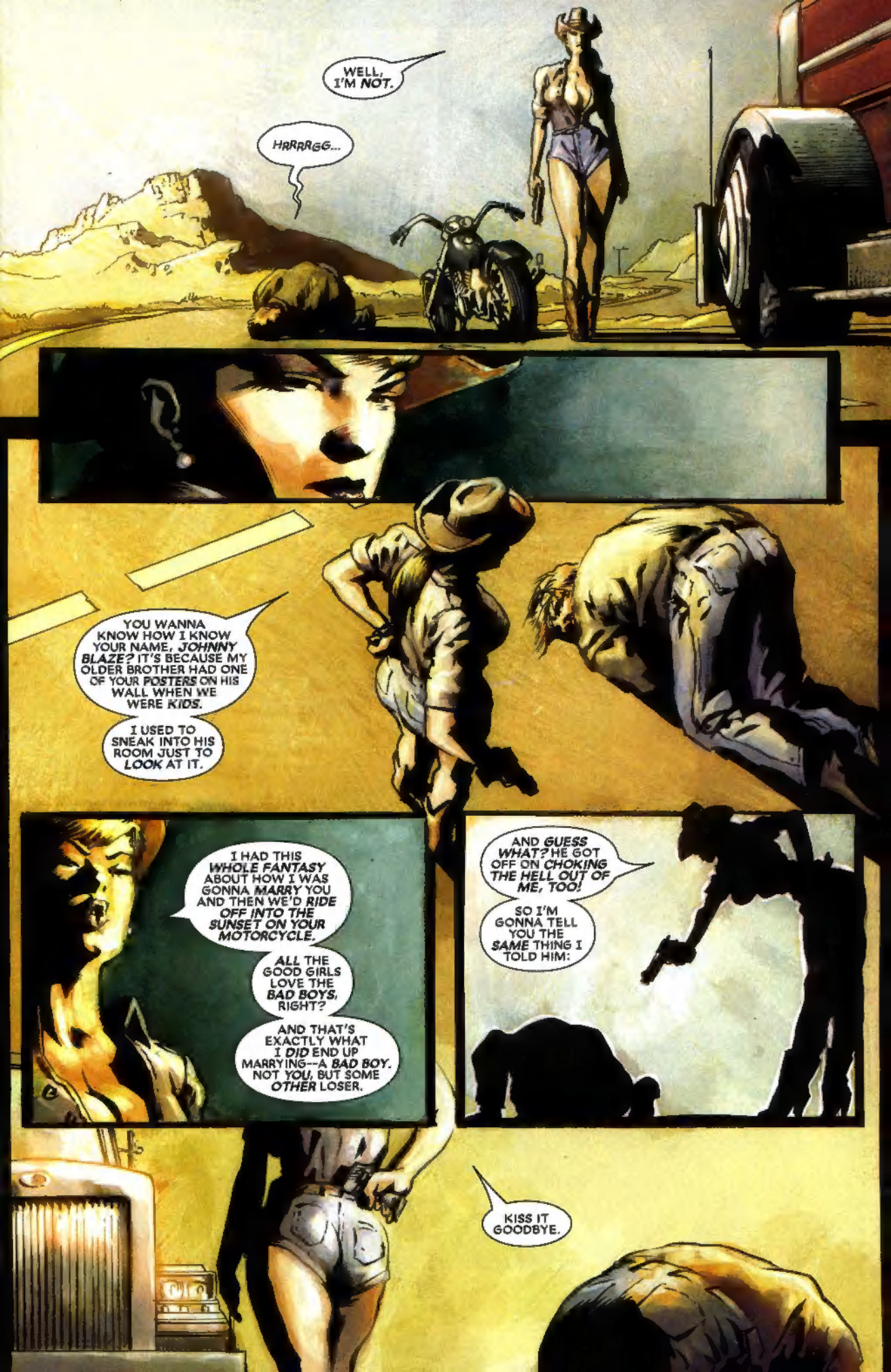

SO HERE I AM:
BACK ON EARTH.
JOHNNY BLAZE RIDES AGAIN.
VICIOUS CYCLE
PART TWO
DANIEL WAY SCRIPT
JAVIER SALTARES BREAKDOWNS
MARK TEXEIRA FINISHES
DAN BROWN COLORS
VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA LETTERS
MICHAEL O'CONNOR ASSISTANT EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER

WELL, NOW...
...LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH HELL.
DIXIE'S RIG
YEAH. YOU COULD SAY THAT.

NICE WHEELS.
OUTTA GAS?
YEAH. I THINK SO.
WELL, I'M FULLA DIESEL, SO THAT AIN'T GONNA HELP YOU MUCH...
I'M DELIVERIN' TO A TRUCK STOP 'BOUT NINETY MILES DOWN THE HIGHWAY, THOUGH...WANT A LIFT?
I GUESS... WHAT ABOUT MY BIKE?
LEAVE IT.
BUT...?
THINK ABOUT IT, JOHNNY--
--WHO'S GONNA--
--STEAL IT?

HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?
TAKE... YOUR HAND...
CLIKK!
...OFF OF ME.
I'M NOT CHANGING INTO GHOST RIDER.
THIS ISN'T LUCIFER.
I... I'M... SORRY?
FFUMP!


WELL, I'M NOT.
HRRRRGG...
YOU WANNA KNOW HOW I KNOW YOUR NAME, JOHNNY BLAZE? IT'S BECAUSE MY OLDER BROTHER HAD ONE OF YOUR POSTERS ON HIS WALL WHEN WE WERE KIDS.
I USED TO SNEAK INTO HIS ROOM JUST TO LOOK AT IT.
I HAD THIS WHOLE FANTASY ABOUT HOW I WAS GONNA MARRY YOU AND THEN WE'D RIDE OFF INTO THE SUNSET ON YOUR MOTORCYCLE.
ALL THE GOOD GIRLS LOVE THE BAD BOYS, RIGHT?
AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I DID END UP MARRYING--A BAD BOY. NOT YOU, BUT SOME OTHER LOSER.
AND GUESS WHAT? HE GOT OFF ON CHOKING THE HELL OUT OF ME, TOO!
SO I'M GONNA TELL YOU THE SAME THING I TOLD HIM:
KISS IT GOODBYE.

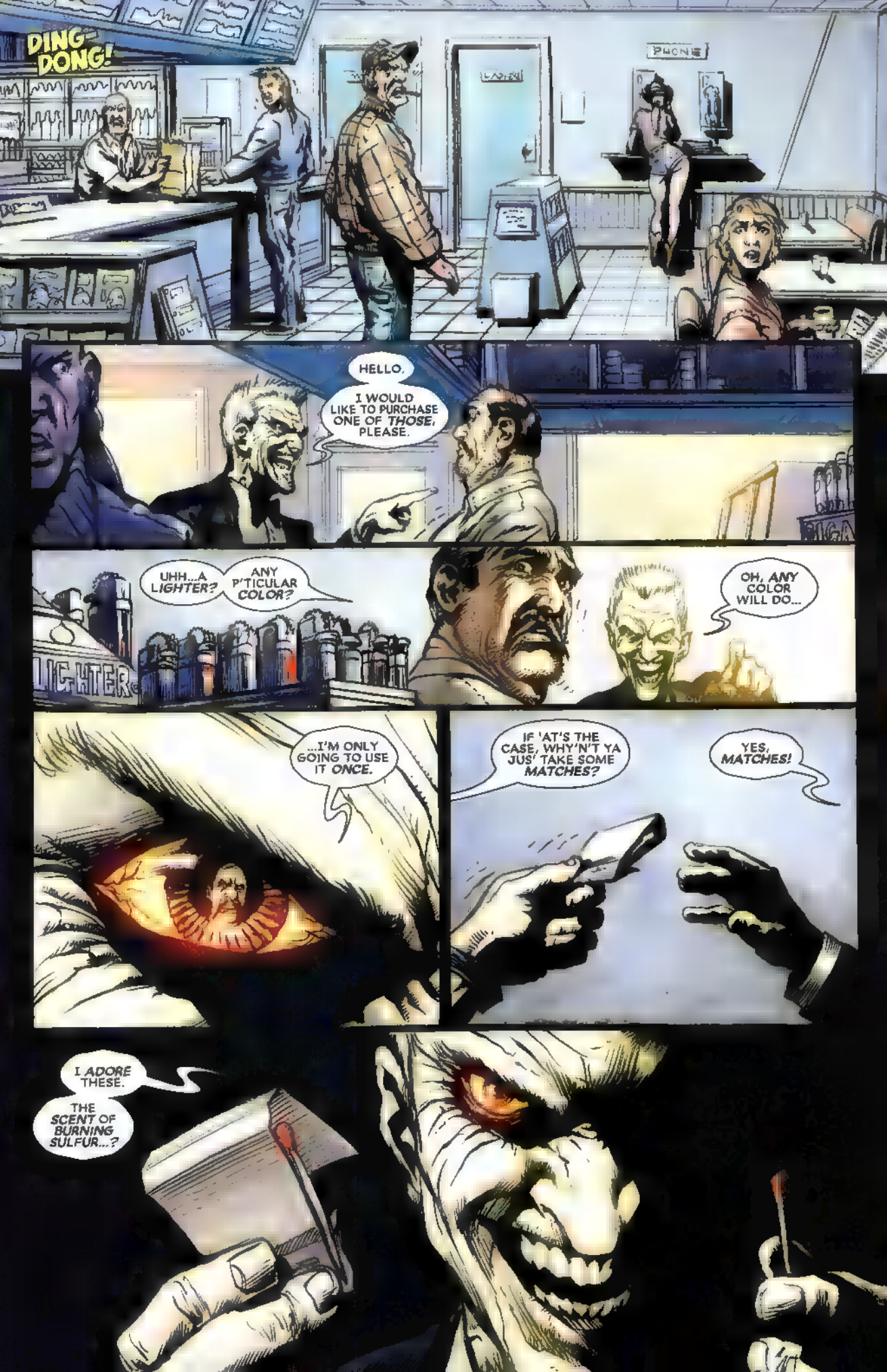
NO... WAIT.
PLEASE...
...DON'T LEAVE ME HERE.
THERE WAS NOBODY THERE FOR ME WHEN I NEEDED HELP--THEY ALL JUST LOOKED THE OTHER WAY, LEFT ME THERE ALONE.
TO DIE.
I'LL BE DAMNED IF I'LL DO IT TO SOMEBODY ELSE.
THANK YOU, I...
...I REALLY--
JUST GET IN AND LET'S ROLL.
DIXIE'S RIG
YOU'RE DOING IT BECAUSE THERE OUGHTTA BE SOME GOOD IN THIS WORLD...
YOU'RE GIVING HIM A RIDE BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO... THAT'S IT.

"...TO GO WITH ALL THE BAD."
HOW'S EVERYBODY DOING BACK THERE?
EVERYBODY COMFORTABLE?
I GUESS I'LL TAKE THAT AS A "NO".
WELL, IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION...
...IT'S ALMOST OVER.
TRUCK STOP NEXT EXIT

IRON SKILLET
THIS IS IT.
END OF THE LINE, JOHNNY-BOY.
THANKS, DIXIE.
I REALLY--
HERE.
GET A CAN OF GAS, GET YOURSELF CLEANED UP AND GET SOMETHING TO EAT.
TAKE IT...
...PLEASE.
DON'T GIVE UP, JOHNNY...
...YOU'LL NEVER FORGIVE YOURSELF IF YOU DO.

A LONG TIME AGO, A FRIEND OF MINE--THE MAN WHO RAISED ME AS HIS *SON*--NEEDED HELP...AND OUT OF ALL THE THINGS I COULD'VE DONE TO HELP HIM, I PICKED THE WORST ONE:
I MADE A *DEAL* WITH THE *DEVIL*.
BIG SURPRISE: IT DIDN'T EXACTLY WORK OUT IN MY FAVOR. *OR* MY FRIEND'S.
EVER SINCE THEN, MY SOUL'S BEEN BONDED TO A MYSTICAL FORCE KNOWN AS THE *GHOST RIDER*, A BEING THAT EMERGES IN THE PRESENCE OF EVIL, BUT WHO'S ALWAYS AND FOREVER A PART OF ME.
WHAT CAN I SAY? I GOT *SHAFTED*.
STRAIGHT TO *HELL*.
BUT THAT'S JUST ME, JOHNNY BLAZE--ALWAYS TRYING TO DO THE *RIGHT* THING, BUT ALWAYS *DOING* IT WRONG.
THIS TIME, THOUGH...
THIS TIME I *REALLY* SCREWED UP: WHEN I FINALLY ESCAPED HELL, I BROUGHT THE *DEVIL* OUT WITH ME.
IT JUST DOESN'T GET ANY MORE WRONG THAN THAT.

I WANT EVERYONE TO *STAY PUT*...IS THAT CLEAR?
GOOD.
I...
I THOUGHT GRAMPA DIED...
HE *DID* DIE, SWEETIE...
...THAT'S *NOT* GRAMPA.
FUNERAL HOME
AH, WHAT A DAY...
...WHAT A *GLORIOUS* DAY TO BE ALIVE.


DING-DONG!
PHONE
HELLO.
I WOULD LIKE TO PURCHASE ONE OF THOSE, PLEASE.
UHH...A LIGHTER?
ANY P'TICULAR COLOR?
OH, ANY COLOR WILL DO...
LIGHTER
...I'M ONLY GOING TO USE IT ONCE.
IF 'AT'S THE CASE, WHY'N'T YA JUS' TAKE SOME MATCHES?
YES, MATCHES!
I ADORE THESE.
THE SCENT OF BURNING SULFUR...?

FSSSSHHH-
REMINDS ME OF HOME.
CLOSE COVER, STRIKE ONCE
HAHAHAHAHOOOMMMFFFF!
HI, JOHNNY.

HOW'S LIFE BEEN TREATING YOU?
PHONE

KOSSHHHH!
THAT WAS...
...EASY.
NOT SO TOUGH UP HERE, ARE YOU?
NOT AT THE MOMENT...
...BUT I'M WORKING ON IT.
OH, YEAH?
WORK ON THIS!

I ALMOST FEEL...SORRY FOR YOU, JOHNNY.
ALMOST.
FUNERAL HOME
YOU'VE ENTANGLED YOURSELF IN A SITUATION THAT IS COMPLETELY OVER YOUR HEAD...
...AND YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW IT.
A SITUATION THAT YOUR INVOLVEMENT...
...WILL ONLY MAKE WORSE.
CAUTION

TIME TO MAKE A DECISION, JOHNNY...
...WHAT'S IT GONNA BE?
IF I GET ANY CLOSER, THE VAN WILL GO UP IN FLAMES.
IF I BACK OFF, THOUGH...
...IF I BACK OFF, HE JUST MIGHT TORCH IT ANYWAY.
TICK.
TOCK.
TICK.
TOCK.
CAN'T TAKE THAT CHANCE.
IF I CAN GRAB HIM WITH THE CHAIN...
GET HIM AWAY FROM THE VAN...
CHANK!
TIME'S UP, JOHNNY.

CHK!

SUCKS TO BE THEM!
SUICIDES GO TO HELL, JOHNNY.

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE HESITATED!
HONK! HONNNNK!
DON'T WORRY, JOHNNY--YOU'LL GET ANOTHER CHANCE.
SIX HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE OF THEM, AS A MATTER OF FACT.
NNNoooooooooo-

GHOST WRITERS

Hold onto your handlebars, Ghosty fans! More letters than you can shake a chain at!

Hi, Ghost Rider gang!

I just wanted to drop a few lines to let you guys know what an excellent read *GR #1* was. I gotta tell you that I have never been a Ghost Rider fan (never picked up an issue in my life actually), but I decided to give it a try just to see if I would like it. And no, I did not like it. I LOVED it.

Mr. Way is a damn good writer and I'm loving his work on *Wolverine Origins* as well. The artwork is top-notch and the whole team on the book does great work. I will definitely be back next month for issue 2. You guys have hooked me and I now consider myself a Ghost Rider fan. Thank you and Make Mine Marvel!!

Hector D. Montes
Internet

Welcome, Hector! And to the other new fans out there, saddle up and get ready for one hell of a ride.

Dear Marvel,

Thanks for giving Ghost Rider his own monthly series again. He really deserves it. It's also great to see Mark Texeira and Javier Saltares back as the art team. I think this series will definitely be better than Garth Ennis' run, which brings me to the following questions. Okay, here goes:

1) Exactly how did Johnny Blaze end up in Hell? Did I miss something?

2) Why is this Ghost Rider dressed the same as the Dan Ketch Ghost Rider?

3) What happened to Blaze's kids? Remember them?

4) At the end of the second Ghost Rider series, which, by the way, you never ended properly with an official "final issue", we find out that the Noble Kale Ghost Rider became the king of Hell. If so, where is he? And why didn't he help Blaze to escape Hell?

5) And this isn't a question, but a request. Please have Doctor Strange, The Punisher, Mephisto and Daimon Hellstrom (current incarnation, not the old one) guest star. Okay?

Thanks! I hope this book has a long and hellish run.

Mike Axtell
Portage, MI

Mike, we're psyched to have you onboard. I consulted Daniel Way himself for the answers to some of your questions:

1) Wait and see, my friend. That story will be told soon.

2) Honest answer? Because that's the way Javier drew him. And it looks cooler than the skintight bodysuit. But to theorize, Ghost Rider's "clothes" are a manifestation of his power, not an actual physical costume or uniform—he could appear to be "wearing" anything. I doubt that it would really matter to the Ghost Rider what he looks like and, at this point in his life, I don't think Johnny much cares, either. He has more important things to worry about.

3) Keep your eyes open.

4) There is a plan to publish the lost issue of the second Ghost Rider series soon. As far as Noble Kale being the "king of Hell"...well, there are many Hells.

5) Doctor Strange? Check. Punisher? The consequences of his actions will result in a showdown between Ghosty and a classic villain. Mephisto? Keep reading. Daimon Hellstrom? Check out the upcoming MAX series, *Hellstorm: Son of Satan*—it will blow your mind.

Good day, oh disciples of Zarathos!

I have been a Ghost Rider fan ever since I made mine Marvel. I have read both the Blaze and Ketch storylines, and there is one thing I must cry out loud: "Thank the Lord Mark Texeira is back!" I personally believe that Mr. Texeira was born to draw ol' Flamehead. It would be a great honor to shake his hand.

I mean, the first issue until the 24th issue of the Ketch GR had a unique kind of art. It was very dark and for me, it is the only way to ever draw *Ghost Rider*. No offense to all the others who drew *GR*, but I really believe that Tex is the best! So, I hope that this time, he is cast into eternal damnation as the artist of this monthly and never again abandons *Ghost Rider*!

Before I go, there is just one thing I want to be clear about: this Ghost Rider is Zarathos, right? So, all I can say is, in Philippine terms, "Mabuhay si *Ghost Rider*!"

Christopher Constantino
Quezon City, Philippines

P.S. Mabuhay means "long live!"

We've already cast Texeira into Hell. He calls it "deadlines." If he can keep up with them, we'll be glad to have him until the sea hails with the blood of the masses.

To the *Ghost Rider* crew,

Evening! Awful hot day out there, isn't it? Hotter than hell, that's for sure. What better time to pick up a new issue of *Ghost Rider*?

You know, I've been reading comics for 30 damn years and I never had a letter printed? It's like I am languishing in eternal denial, never allowed to break through to the promised land of those lucky readers who received that coveted distinction. So, in a way, I can relate to Ghosty and his current plight...

I remember the days of John Burn—I mean Byrne—art. I remember the re-launch (was not Javier a part of that as well?). I was never able to keep up with Ghost Rider though. Something always pulled me in a different direction...but I read this new number one here in the unforgiving heat and I realize that it's different now.

I have to say that I like the direction that Way seems to be headed. I love the art, and I can't wait to see what the next issue brings. Man, who does this Lucifer guy think he is? Doesn't he know who he's dealing with? Oh, I'm sure he'll present Ghost Rider with a Hell of a challenge, but that's why I'm looking forward to the next issue.

So rest assured that I will be there in the coming months, checking out the action...but how the Hell do I get out of my torment? How do I get a letter printed? You editors are a tougher code to crack than that Da Vinci book...how about I try to take advantage of what will undoubtedly be your next letter's page poser—what if I can come up with a good title for the letters page? How about "Ghost Writers?" That's kinda cool...er, I mean hot. Well, I'll keep trying. Seems like Ghost Rider wouldn't have it any other way.

Mike M.
Internet

Well, Mike, you weren't the only fan to suggest "Ghost Writers." We were practically inundated with that suggestion. But you were the only guy to never get your letter printed. Good luck with that, by the way.

Dear Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Alonso and Mr. Quesada:

Thank you. Once again you have made me a very happy man. I have in my hands this month's Ghost Rider #1, and I couldn't be happier.

What a way to start a new ongoing series for good ole Flame-Head!

I have been a Marvel Comics fan since I started reading. My grandparents would buy me Spider-Man and Avengers Comics. But the character that really has made me a collector and an aficionado was Ghost Rider.

I must've been 12 years old when I walked by my local newsstand and saw a Spidey book, with this really weird/awesome cover. Spider-Man seemed to be rolling on the ground, trying to get out of the way of a menacing figure clad in black leather with its head on fire. I got closer and, upon examination, discovered that that flaming skull rolling on the sickest bike ever drawn on paper was actually a hero. A misunderstood avenger of innocent blood, always seeking answers about his nature and his purpose, driven forward by a will that made him into a force of nature. He was dark and mysterious and supernatural. And he was just about the coolest thing I had ever seen. He was the *Ghost Rider*.

Starting that day, I tracked every single back issue of *Ghost Rider* (Johnny Blaze and Danny Ketch), burned all of my allowance on anything Marvel and never looked back. Until, that was, Ghost Rider got cancelled.

You guys BETTER be happy that Daniel Way, Mark Texeira and Javier Saltares did such an amazing job. Because for us *Ghost Rider* fans, complaining and griping has become so natural that I almost started it again.

But there's no longer anything for us to complain about. It's like meeting up with an old lost friend. The story is solid and made me want to read on and I can't believe I have to wait a WHOLE MONTH to get #2! The art is just incredible. Tex and Saltares are at the top of their game. There is no congratulatory statement that would do you guys justice. I am confident that this creative team can take Ghosty to heights we always imagined he could get to and just never got to see.

But is the title going to have a more "super-hero" or "super-natural" feel to it? Either way is fine with me, but I'd really like to find out somewhat what to expect.

This e-mail is really to say thanks, kudos, and express my renewed faith that Marvel does not disappoint its fans. So, until I look like Ghost Rider (sans the fire), MAKE MINE MARVEL.

Boris Karloff
Internet

Boris, we're all big fans of yours as well. And the Ghost Rider himself loves your classic horror movies... wait, you're not *that* Boris Karloff? Oh well, we're thrilled to have you along anyway.

--Michael

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NEXT ISSUE:

The Doctor's in, and Ghost Rider's ready to take him out! Don't miss it!